

26. Salt. There was a considerable fall in the output of the pans during 1999, as a result of the intermittent rains during both the manufacturing seasons. The Public Works Department has completed the drainage works in the Rajakkamangalam and Colachel factories. Certain important works of improvement have also been executed to the Tamarakulam Extension Factory, No. II. The objects of these and other similar works were the securing of brine direct from the sea for the factories at Colachel and Rajakkamangalam and the prevention of percolation of fresh water in the pans and brine reservoirs of these and the Tamarakulam factories. These objects, I regret to say, have, however, not been adequately realised and the problem seems to need fresh examination. Moreover, in the Manakudi lake, which is the source of brine supply to Tamarakulam, where the largest and most important factories exist, sea water can be got only during high tide, while, owing to the constant discharge of river water into the lake, the density of the brine in it is hardly even 1° B. as against the strength of 3° B. usually found in the Bombay factories. With a view to meet this difficulty, the Excise Commissioner has submitted a proposal for pumping brine direct from the sea to the Tamarakulam pans and the proposal is now under investigation by the Chief Engineer. As the licensees of the Tamarakulam factory are keen on the execution of this project and are willing to pay for the brine, the Government do not anticipate that the scheme will be unremunerative. It is hoped that the Chief Engineer will be in a position to submit a workable scheme at an early date.

27. Banking. The final orders of the Government are just issuing on the very important question of the formation of the State-aided Bank. In the allotment of shares, the Directorate has been instructed to give preference to Travancoreans; and it has been decided to reduce the deposit to accompany the applications for shares from Rs. 10 to Rs. 5 per share. Since all the preliminary arrangements in connection with the scheme are now complete, it is hoped that there will be no further delay in the registration of this bank.

28. Savings Banks. The number of Anchal Offices doing savings bank business has risen from 44 to 73 during the last four years, the number of private transactions in them increasing from 14,457 to 47,615. The deposits have gone up from Rs. 18.39 lakhs to Rs. 22.85 lakhs, and the withdrawals from Rs. 17.06 lakhs to Rs. 21.19 lakhs. The minimum in regard to deposits and withdrawals has recently been reduced from half a rupee to quarter of a rupee with a view to enhance the usefulness of these institutions to the poorer classes of the population for whose benefit they are primarily intended.

29. State Life Insurance. Revised rules regarding the State Life Insurance were issued in 1999. Under the old rules, the premium was invariably fixed at 10 per cent. of the proposer's pay. The minimum rate of premium has now been reduced to 5 per cent. of the proposer's pay with option to bring up the sum to a maximum of Rs. 50 a month. Rules relating to the lapsing of policies and the conditions under which lapsed policies may be revived have been newly introduced. The scheme for opening a public branch of the State Life Insurance, which may be availed of by the non-official public, referred to in paragraph 39 of my address last year, is being sanctioned and it is so framed as to confer many substantial benefits on the public, and specially on the poorer sections thereof. To bring the scheme within the reach of the poor, the minimum for a policy has been fixed at the very small figure of Rs. 100; and in view of the comparatively low cost at which a State life insurance scheme can be successfully worked, the rates of premia are specially favourable. It is hoped that, in Travancore where the people are alive to the benefits of life insurance, the scheme will receive adequate encouragement.

30. Co-operation. It is gratifying to note that the co-operative movement, started in the country nearly a decade ago, is making rapid advance. The total number of societies rose from 177 at the close of 1995 to 757 at the close of 1999. Since then, mainly as the result of special propaganda work in flood-affected areas, the number of societies has increased to 830. Of the 757 societies registered up to

the end of 1099, one was a Central Bank and one a Central Weaving Society, while 10 were Supervising Unions, leaving a balance of 745 primary societies, of which 601 were agricultural and 144 non-agricultural. There were also six Taluk Unions. 706 of these societies were actually at work in 1099. The number of members of primary societies has increased from 11,664 to 46,297 during the last four years. Calculating the strength of each family at five, it may be presumed that, on the average, one person out of every 17 of the population has come within the influence of the co-operative movement. Two more Supervising Unions have come into existence in the current year. The aggregate working capital of the societies has risen within the last four years from Bh. Rs. 2.50 lakhs to Bh. Rs. 8.33 lakhs, and the paid-up share capital from Bh. Rs. 1.09 lakhs to Bh. Rs. 4.32 lakhs. The number of loans issued by primary societies has increased from 6,082 to 18,793 and their value from Bh. Rs. 2,03,655 to Bh. Rs. 5,44,360 within the last four years. The volume of deposits in the Central Bank, Trivandrum, has risen during the same period from Bh. Rs. 5,323 to Bh. Rs. 2,35,115. It is worthy of note that, in spite of unfavourable seasonal and other conditions towards the close of 1099, the arrears of overdues fell from 39.2 per cent. to 35 per cent. in the case of principal, and from 47.6 per cent. to 40 per cent. in the case of interest; but a great deal of leeway has still to be made up in the reduction of outstandings under these heads. Almost the whole of the sum of two lakhs of rupees, placed by the Government at the disposal of the Central Bank, for distribution through co-operative societies as loans to sufferers in flood-affected areas, has already been distributed. At the end of Dhanu, 1100, there were as many as 163 societies exclusively for the depressed classes, of which 85 were for Pulayas and Chēramars, 26 for Vālans, 23 for Arayas, 11 for Parayas and Sāmbavars, 16 for coast Christian fishermen and one each for Vēlāns and Kānis.

31. Ports. The shipping at the ports is steadily improving, the number of steamers calling at them having risen from 37 to 201 during the last four years. The two steam winches with derricks, sanctioned for the port of Alleppey, have arrived and they will be installed on the pier forthwith. A scheme for the creation of a Landing and Shipping Dues Committee for the port of Alleppey was placed before the local mercantile community. Their remarks have now been received and orders will soon issue. At Trivandrum, work in connection with the extension of the pier is in progress, and land is being levelled for the provision of a larger stacking ground and for the erection of three zinc-roofed sheds for the storage of cargo.

32. Industries. The Department of Industries usually comes in for a certain amount of criticism. It has, however, to be remembered that the department was started only in 1094, i. e., barely six years ago. The first two years were mostly spent in what might be termed reconnoitering; and when the department began to feel its way, its attention was concentrated on certain lines of work, the chief of which were (i) the creation of suitable facilities for research, investigation and demonstration for the four State scholars who were entertained in service in 1097 and 1098 on their return after specialising in leather, textiles, oil, and electrical and mechanical engineering, respectively, (ii) the encouragement of cottage industries and technical and industrial education, and (iii) the discovery of fresh uses for raw materials and of fresh markets for the country's produce.

33. The Leather Expert investigated the resources of Travancore in skins and tanning materials and has published a report which shows that there is scope for the establishment of half-a-dozen up-to-date tanneries in the State for the manufacture of leather, and that, although there may be some difficulty in finding suitable markets for finished leather, half-tanned leather may be readily disposed of in foreign markets. A building with suitable accessories for the demonstration of improved methods of tanning hides and skins with local tan-stuffs has been constructed at Karamanai near Trivandrum, and the Leather Expert has started tanning operations in it and is demonstrating the manufacture of light leather from kips, goat-skins and calf-skins and heavy leather from buffalo-hides. He has also visited all the private tanneries in the State and has suggested measures for remedying the defects in their working.